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## Like Fire in Dry Stubble - The Stone Movement 1804-1832 (Part 2)

R. L. Roberts

J W. Roberts

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# RESTORATION QUARTERLY

## CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| The Biblical Doctrine of the People of God—Richard Batey.....                                    | 2  |
| Introduction to Septuagintal Studies (continued)<br>—George Howard .....                         | 10 |
| Like Fire in Dry Stubble—The Stone Movement 1804-1832<br>(Part II)—R. L. and J. W. Roberts ..... | 26 |
| The Typology of Baptism in the Early Church<br>—Everett Ferguson .....                           | 41 |
| Matthew 10:23 and Eschatology (II)—Royce Clark .....   | 53 |
| A Note on the "Double Portion" of Deuteronomy 21:17<br>and II Kings 2:9—Paul Watson .....        | 70 |
| Book Reviews .....   | 76 |

STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP  
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## Like Fire in Dry Stubble—The Stone Movement 1804-1832 (Part II)

R. L. and J. W. Roberts

The previous part of this paper made mention of some of the factors in the Stone movement which contributed to its success. Attention was especially called to the westward migration of persons connected with the Christian churches of the O'Kelly and the Smith-Jones movements east of the Alleghany Mountains and to the local movements within the Ohio-Mississippi basin such as that of the Mulkeys. Now attention is directed to the story of the evangelism of the Stone forces.

It is in the powerful evangelistic thrust of the Stone forces which built a mighty fellowship of churches in the Ohio, Tennessee, and the Mississippi valleys between the years 1804 and 1832 that the real story of the Stone movement is to be found. The story would fill volumes; it is possible only to sketch it.

The story of the Cane Ridge revival is too well known to be repeated. So is that of the Springfield Presbytery and Stone's dialogues with his former Presbyterian brethren. This study will be confined to the factors involved in the spread of the plea.

The bare facts of the five years following the dissolving of the Springfield Presbytery by *The Last Will and Testament* were discouraging. Two of the original five preachers (McNemar and Dunlavy) were captured by the Shakers. Marshall and Thompson grew wary of the idea of churches without human creeds and a denominational government and in 1809 created a crisis. When defeated by Stone, Dooley, and Kincade, they returned to Presbyterianism. About this time Stone reported that there was a threat against his life. Later he said, "Of all five of us that left the Presbyterian church I only was left, and they sought my life." Thus, as the decade which had begun with the revival closed, the movement seemed to be limping badly. About this time Stone was also burdened by the death, first of his son, then of his wife. Later accounts of these years were pessimistic.

But Stone had not been idle. Nor were things actually going badly. Despite the defection of the original workers, the intense opposition of his former brethren, and the cries that he was not orthodox, Stone had begun to infuse life into the new group. The original fifteen churches (eight in Kentucky and seven in Ohio) of 1803-04 had increased to twenty-four in 1807, with 417 members, and the cause was flourishing in Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, and Tennessee.<sup>1</sup> Even as early as 1803, after the split from their former Synod, seven new

<sup>1</sup>Henry Burris, "News Item," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, V (March 5, 1813), 471.



congregations had been started.<sup>2</sup> The recruiting of new forces by extending fellowship to the Mulkey forces, followed later by the joining of a Baptist conference in Ohio, surely must have added new impetus.

The spirit of evangelism burned brightly. A traveling preacher from Alexandria, Virginia, wrote to Elias Smith that he had attended nine camp meetings in Kentucky in 1809 and had seen "thousands" converted.<sup>3</sup> The technique of the camp meeting was to be widely used throughout the movement.

New voices were found to replace the preachers who deserted. Another writer in the *Herald of Gospel Liberty* told of attending a five-day camp meeting near Lexington, Kentucky, in October 1808 at which forty-seven preaching brethren were present and "very great crowds."<sup>4</sup> Examples of the type of men involved were Nathan Worley and Thomas Kyle,<sup>5</sup> men who later became well known among the churches and who joined Stone in Kentucky in 1804. Clement Nance joined Stone in 1803 and moved to Indiana in 1805.

When Joseph Thomas visited Tennessee in 1810, he related that at Hopewell meeting house at Bledso's Creek in West (actually Central) Tennessee twenty-one preachers were present, including Joel Ha[y]den.<sup>6</sup>

Stone seems to have been especially successful in attracting and inspiring young preachers by his ideas. At times like the years he lived at Lexington (1815-19) and at Georgetown (1819-34) he taught schools which attracted aspirant young preachers.<sup>7</sup> On his frequent evangelistic trips he would convert a young man and encourage him to preach by returning and traveling with him later in his vicinity.<sup>8</sup> Then he was influential in getting churches to sponsor and send out men to preach the Gospel afire with zeal for what they believed. Levi Purviance told of the example:

About this time, many talented young men were raised up in the bounds of Caneridge and Concord churches, who had become very useful exhorters. David Purviance and Barton W. Stone ascertained that they could by no means fill the calls for preaching. They proposed to these two churches to select several of the most influential among them and encourage them to travel and supply destitute neighborhoods with meetings for

<sup>2</sup>A. W. Fortune, *The Disciples in Kentucky* (The Convention of the Christian Churches in Kentucky), 1932, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup>"News Item," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, I (1809), 40.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>5</sup>W. D. Frazee, *Reminiscences and Sermons* (Nashville, Gospel Advocate Company, 1892), pp. 56f.

<sup>6</sup>Joseph Thomas, *The Life of the Pilgrim Joseph Thomas* (Winchester, Virginia: J. Foster, Printers, 1817), p. 123.

<sup>7</sup>Some of those who sat at Stone's feet at Georgetown were John Rogers, Leonard J. Fleming, Francis R. Palmer, James Robeson, James Kicklin, Hamilton Grey, Harrison W. Osborne, Marcus P. Willis and John Allen Gano. Charles Crossfield Ware, *Barton W. Stone* (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1832), p. 206.

<sup>8</sup>E.g., Matthew Gardner.

worship. The two churches met accordingly, and appointed Andrew Ireland, John Purviance, David Kirkpatrick and William Caldwell, and sent them out as evangelists. They went forth two and two, and God blessed them and their labor, and made them a blessing to the world, and many new churches were raised up under their instrumentality.<sup>9</sup>

Such young preachers were responsible for many new converts. Elder James Shurtless of Ohio reported to the *Christian Herald* of Nov. 8, 1821 (pp. 88f.) that there had been a recent revival in Kentucky in which two young preachers, eighteen and nineteen years old, had converted 1100 people either in that state or near it.

One of the things noted by Joseph Thomas during his trip to the West was that many of the churches there were supporting their evangelists while they traveled and spread the word.<sup>10</sup> Stone and Purviance were the inspiration. One who knew them said,

But the Christian ensign, i.e., the New Covenant never trailed in the dust when borne by Stone and Purviance. These two men caused a perfect upheaval among churches in Ky.<sup>11</sup>

Revivals became the order of the day. The following extract from a letter from a correspondent at Frankfort, Kentucky, dated July 1, 1819 (*Christian Herald*, Vol. 2, p. 24), was hailed by the editor as "like good news from a far country,"

In the southern part of this state, there is a revival of religion, extending through the counties of Allen, Warren, Logan, and Barrin. About 100 in Russelville, from 50 to 100 in Bolin (*sic*) Green. Some hundreds in the neighborhood of these places, and in Scotsville and Glasgow, have been added to the churches.

Stone's group did not have to "learn evangelism" as did the Campbells. The latter group came out of old light theology, which was suspicious of revivals and evangelism. Alexander Campbell never made it a practice to offer an invitation. What seemed so strange to the Campbell group in the work of Scott, who turned hundreds to the Gospel in Ohio in 1827 on the Western Reserve, was something which was natural to the Christians in Kentucky. Stone had been through the revival and knew how to appeal to the people for Christ. Zeal and passion for lost souls came naturally. Stone later spoke of these years as those in which the plea "spread like fire in dry stubble."<sup>12</sup>

Following the death of his wife, Stone turned to traveling preaching. A great series of earthquakes which shook the Mississippi valley and which created Reelfoot Lake in Tennessee in 1811-12 greatly

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<sup>9</sup>Levi Purviance, *The Biography of Elder David Purviance* (Dayton, B. F. and G. W. Elis, 1848), p. 50.

<sup>10</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>11</sup>Frazee, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>12</sup>William Garrett West, *Barton Warren Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954), p. 150.



shocked the people and made many receptive to religion.<sup>13</sup> At the Mt. Tabor meeting on March 11, 1811, Stone and Reuben Dooley (both recent widowers) agreed to give their full time to evangelism. Leaving their children with brethren and without even a change of clothing, they went forth. At Eaton (Preble County), Ohio, where several of their former friends lived, great crowds attended and almost the whole town was converted. They separated to penetrate the back settlements. In September Stone was called to Adams County, Ohio, where his converts included Matthew Gardner, who began preaching almost immediately and traveled with Stone on his yearly visits to Ohio for twenty years.<sup>14</sup> A group of Separate Baptist churches which had formed an association met in Meigs County, Ohio. David Caldwell, one of their preachers, had heard of Stone and his plea. He had sent for Stone to baptize him. Stone and Dooley went to do this. Stone was then asked to meet for worship and deliberation with the association. A difficulty arose upon which they could make no decision, and Stone was asked to speak on it. He related:

It was evidently a case with which they had no right to meddle, and which involved the system of church government. I spoke freely and fully on the point, and showed it to be a party measure, and of course unscriptural. I exerted myself with meekness against sectarianism, formularies and creeds, and labored to establish the Scriptural Union of Christians and their Scriptural name. Till Christians were united in spirit on the Bible, I showed there would be no end to such difficult cases as now agitated them. Having closed my speech, I retired to the worship ground.<sup>15</sup>

Stone's preaching led to the dropping of the name Baptist and the union of the Association with the Christian movement. Within the group were twelve preachers. Caldwell himself became a successful preacher throughout the regions of Pennsylvania and the eastern states.

This trip is cited as an example of the preaching tours. Stone records in his autobiography that he and a companion preached and founded churches throughout the states of Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. In 1812 Stone remarried and moved with his wife to Middle Tennessee, just above Nashville, where they lived a short while.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Clement Nance reported from Ohio that the tremendous shaking of the earth last winter alarmed numbers. A glorious revival took place in that new country. *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, V, 424.

<sup>14</sup>N. Summerbell (ed.), *The Autobiography of Elder Matthew Gardner* (Dayton: Christian Publishing Association, 1874).

<sup>15</sup>James R. Rogers, *The Cane Ridge Meeting House* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1910), p. 195.

<sup>16</sup>Stone says, "While I was in Tennessee my field of labor in the word was very circumscribed, and my manual labors took up much of my time in fixing for a comfortable living." (C. C. Ware, *Barton Warren Stone*, St. Louis, Bethany Press, 1932, p. 68). Yet John Carr, a resident of Middle Tennessee, wrote in a reminiscent vein of



In 1815 he was back in Lexington, Ky., where he alternated in preaching and teaching. From 1819 to 1835 he lived at Georgetown where he ran a school which attracted a large number of young preachers as previously mentioned. Here Stone lived until he moved to Jacksonville, Ill., in 1834. But all this while the heart of his work still remained the long trips which he took to stir the zeal of the brethren and to call men to repentance.

Stone's itinerant preaching was imitated by many of his fellow laborers. A good example is to be found in the story of the life of Samuel Rogers.<sup>17</sup> Often his trips would last for weeks or months. With nothing more than a horse and saddle he sought out new settlements, visited and revisited with the Gospel. Rogers made many trips into Ohio, Indiana, Missouri, and Virginia (among the Elias Smith churches). His ministry gave to the Restoration Movement the great preacher and editor Benjamin Franklin.

#### THE CONFERENCE MOVEMENT

Probably nothing indicates the extent of the growth and penetration of the Western Christian churches so much as the details of the conference system which in Kentucky was begun by the Christians in 1810 and which spread rapidly in the following years.

Though the churches rejected the plan of Thompson and Marshall to denominationalize the group, in August of 1810 the churches of Central Kentucky organized a conference. Stone in recording the history of these years described it thus:

At a general meeting of ministers of the Christian church at Bethel, in the state of Kentucky, August 8th, 1810, the brethren, taking into consideration their scattered local situation, their increasing numbers, and the difficulties arising in the execution of their office, agreed to unite themselves together formally, taking the word of God as their only rule and standard for doctrine, discipline and government, and promising subjection to each other in the Lord, having hereunto subscribed their names according to their present standing in said connection.<sup>18</sup>

It should be noted that the first conference seems to have been formed in Ohio where the Deer Creek Conference began as early as

Stone whom he knew well. Carr had heard him preach often and paid him tribute as a "great and good man" (*Early Times in Middle Tennessee*, Nashville, R. H. Horsley and Assoc. Reprint, 1958, p. 45). The evidence for extended preaching by Stone over much of Middle Tennessee during this time and on his trips exists. T. M. Allen spoke in 1860 of Stone's work in Tennessee near Murfreesboro, where he had labored "a half a century ago." Some of those he baptized and with whom he had worked were still living there when Allen wrote (*Millennial Harbinger*, Vol. 1860, p. 478).

<sup>17</sup>John I. Rogers, *Autobiography of Samuel Rogers* (Cincinnati: Standard Pub. Co., 1880).

<sup>18</sup>Barton W. Stone, "History of the Christian Church in the West," *Christian Messenger*, I (October 25, 1827), pp. 267ff.



1808 according to W. E. Garrison.<sup>19</sup> The conference system thus begun was to spread widely over the region of the Mississippi before the days of the meeting of the Stone and Campbell forces.

It is most likely that the concept of the conference was borrowed from the Christian churches of the East. The churches of the O'Kelly forces had been accustomed to yearly conference meetings when a part of the Methodist Episcopal group. They continued the meetings later while avoiding what they considered their objectional features—that is, any governmental or directive activity.<sup>20</sup> The New England churches led by Elias Smith and Abner Jones were already in the habit of holding meetings of the same type when Smith began his *Herald of Gospel Liberty* in 1809. *The Christian Register and Almanac* in 1821 reported a conference of twenty-one churches in such a non-legislative cooperative. It was said,

We also consider each Church as a distinct assembly, capable of regulating its own temporal affairs, . . . they ought to be left free enjoyment of such rights, and that if Churches agree to meet by chosen messengers, to confer with each other in matters in which all are equally interested.<sup>21</sup>

Stone made it plain that their meetings were only for edification, for spread of news about the churches, and for the arrangement of appointments to further the cause:

We as a conference meddle not in the government of the churches, leaving each church to act according to the New Testament. We have no other bonds of union than the bonds of charity, and peace and righteousness, founded on the word of God.<sup>22</sup>

At another time he described a meeting in 1832:

No bishop was called to the chair, nor was any clergyman or lay-member chosen president. We entered no resolution upon our minute book, nor did we take the name of an "advisory council." But with one accord in one place we mutually engaged in arranging the (camp meeting) appointments for our next annual meetings so as to promote the cause of the Redeemer.<sup>23</sup>

The growth of the conferences from this beginning cannot be traced in full, for the details are not available. There is no full continuity in a paper to which the Western brethren reported. *The Herald of Gospel Liberty* carried scattered reports until it ceased in 1815.

<sup>19</sup>Winfred Ernest Garrison, *An American Religious Movement* (St. Louis, Bethany Press, 1945), p. 58.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. W. E. MacKlenny, *The Life of Rev. James O'Kelly* (Indianapolis, Religious Book Service, 1950, reprint), p. 155. Compare also a recent dissertation by Charles Franklin, "The James O'Kelly Schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church," Ph.D. Diss., Emory U., 1961 (reproduced by University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan), pp. 53ff.

<sup>21</sup>*The Christian Register and Almanac* (New London: Sam Green, 1821), 25.

<sup>22</sup>CM I (Jan. 25, 1827), 49.

<sup>23</sup>"Religious Intelligence," *ibid.*, VI (Jan. 1832), 27.



There were a few reports in its successors, such as the *Christian Herald* (1818-35) and the *Christian Register and Almanac*. From 1826 on, *The Christian Messenger* provides a medium for following the yearly progress, though it began too late to record the beginning of most of them.

*The Central Kentucky Conference.* The Central Kentucky Conference was the subject of a report by Augustine Eastin in January, 1812. This would be the meeting after the first full year of operation. Writing from Cedar Hill (near Paris, Ky.) he reported on the state of the churches and described a recent appeal to the Baptists of the state.<sup>24</sup> In 1813 after Stone had moved to Tennessee the conference was held in Fleming County. John Gray of Philadelphia, representing the Eastern Christians, was expected. The church in this county added twenty-one members that year and had three preachers set apart for the ministry.<sup>25</sup> By 1827 this conference had "26 elders, 8 unordained preachers, between forty and fifty churches and about 2000 members."<sup>26</sup>

*Three Kentucky Conferences.* By 1825 the original Kentucky group had grown to three distinct conferences.<sup>27</sup> In addition to this North Central group, a southern and western conference had been formed. That year *Christian Register and Almanac* gave the total strength of the three conferences as 3350.<sup>28</sup>

In 1831 T. M. Allen began to gather statistics for the state. He listed thirty-eight churches in the Southern (Southeastern) Conference, some of which (e.g., Indian Creek in Harrison Co., Union in Fleming Co., Harrodsburg in Mercer Co., and Cabin Creek in Lewis Co.) had been members of the earlier group, for the date listed for their establishment is given in the statistics as 1803. Most of these churches had been started between 1815 and 1826. The total membership known to him was 2710.<sup>29</sup> The Western Conference had twelve churches and five hundred souls in 1827.<sup>30</sup>

It was estimated by some of the Stone forces that at the time of the merger of the Stone and Campbell forces (1832-34) the Christian churches had about 10,000 members in Kentucky. With the conference system of reporting the groups knew about what their strength was, so this was probably not far off. But the conference system spread along with the spirit of evangelism to nearby states.

*Ohio.* Ohio was one of the two states in which the original Stone churches were located. In 1804 there were seven congregations there: Turtle Creek, Eagle Creek, Springfield, Orangedale, Salem,

<sup>24</sup>Augustine Eastin, "News Item," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, IV (Jan. 24, 1812), 363.

<sup>25</sup>"News Item," *H.G.L.*, V (Aug. 6, 1813), 516, 530.

<sup>26</sup>Robert Foster (ed.), *The Christian Register and Almanac* (Portsmouth, 1827), 18.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.* (1825), 25.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.* (1827), 20.

<sup>29</sup>*Christian Messenger*, Vol. V, 191f.

<sup>30</sup>Foster, *op. cit.*, 19.

Beaver Creek, and Clear Creek. The groups were much encouraged and helped by the moving of some of Stone's preachers to the state. Thomas Kyle and Nathan Worley both moved in 1805 and David Purviance in 1807. Much of Stone's work (as has been seen) was done there in company with Reuben Dooley, Rice Haggard, Matthew Gardner, and others. It has been noted that the Deer Creek conference was formed as early as 1808. Gardner remembered the organization of the Southern Ohio Conference in Adams County in 1820:

I remember the following as elders present at the organization: Elder David Kirkpatrick, Robert McCoy, Cyrus Richards, Benjamin Van Pelt, and Matthew Gardner. There may have been others whom I do not now call to mind.<sup>31</sup>

By 1827 there were six conferences: South, Miami, Deer Creek, Licking, Salt Creek, and Athens. Total membership of these in the 1827 report was given as 4,390.<sup>32</sup>

*Tennessee.* In point of time Tennessee was second only to Kentucky and Ohio. The early planting of the cause in Tennessee by Christian preachers has been cited. At the time of the union with Campbell there also were three conferences in this state: a central, a western, and an eastern. Mention has already been made of the one in the extreme eastern section of the state under the influence of Jeriel Dodge, James Miller, and others.<sup>33</sup> This conference included some churches in Southwestern Virginia. At a meeting on August 17, 1829, it was ascertained that there were 472 members in the conferences.<sup>34</sup>

The Central Tennessee Conference was probably the largest. Stone reported attending a meeting of this group in August of 1825 at Murfreesboro where thirty believed and were baptized.<sup>35</sup> The conference then included forty-six ordained and four unordained preachers. Camp meetings and revivals were the order of the day. W. D. Jourdan reported that in 1827 he baptized 400 in White County in a few months time.<sup>36</sup> Tolbert Fanning reported in 1832 that he had been "riding" in the vicinity of Shelbyville (in the southern Middle Tennessee) for the past twelve months and had immersed 150.<sup>37</sup> John Hooten reported in 1830 that he was riding in Bedford

<sup>31</sup>Summerbell, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>32</sup>Foster, *op. cit.*, 20.

<sup>33</sup>Part I of this study, p. 156.

<sup>34</sup>*Christian Messenger*, IV (No. 9, August 1830).

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, I (1826), 21.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 14.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, VII (1832), 28. Fanning had been taught and converted under the influence of such teachers as E. D. Moore, James E. Matthews, Ross Houston, and B. F. Hall, being baptized by Hall, Oct. 1, 1827, at Cypress, near Florence, Alabama. Fanning established the *Gospel Advocate*, the oldest and most influential paper among the churches of Christ. See "The Life and Times of Tolbert Fanning" (unpublished thesis of James R. Wilburn, Library, Abilene Christian College, 1961), pp. 22ff.



(Shelbyville) and Maury (Columbia) Counties and had baptized 366 in the last two years. He reported that the conference was to meet at Gordon's Ferry in Hickman Co. that year.<sup>38</sup>

The West Tennessee district had an interesting history, but more research needs to be done on it. The Matthews brothers, James E. and Mansel W., arrived in the southern area (across from the Alabama line) somewhere around 1825. James settled in Alabama, while Mansel settled in McNairy County (the county joining Alabama just west of the Tennessee River). He reported:

When I first came here it was a wilderness; but the blessed Gospel has transformed it into a fruitful field—Many churches have been planted recently in the Western district. I visited many of them last winter in company with Elder A. Anderson, who is riding in this country, and found them in a growing state.<sup>39</sup>

The counties lying just west of the river from McNairy northward through Henderson, Carroll, Gibson, and Henry Counties were the objects of concentrated efforts in the decade from 1825 to 1835. Men such as the Matthews, Allen and Carol Kendrick (who later was to become a leader of renown in Kentucky and Texas), Samuel Giles, Lynn D'Spain, John R. Howard, James A. and James C. Anderson, B. F. Hall, Robert and Elihu Randolph were some of the preachers who recorded their labors. The volumes of *The Christian Messenger* from 1826 to 1835 give numerous reports of these faithful men and report their growing success. This group worked closely with the people in northern Alabama mentioned in Part I of this study.

Various estimates exist of the numerical strength of the Tennessee churches at this time. The report of Robert Foster in 1827 estimated the strength at 1,800. James Matthews in 1831 could number 60 churches with more than 4000 members.<sup>40</sup> But this seems too conservative. In 1832 another writer reported that there were 380 churches known in the state.<sup>41</sup> Some of these (like the church in Nashville, which numbered over 300 in 1833) originated among the Baptists, but most of this gain was among men who had labored with Stone, and many of them had never made contact with Campbell forces. Some of them had only heard of the Campbells and gloried that they too were now laboring in the cause for which the Stone brethren had pleaded so long.<sup>42</sup>

*Alabama.* Mention has already been made of the beginnings in this state (part I, p. 157). James E. Matthews in 1831 was living at Barton, Ala., where he said that he had seen the church grow in five years from ten to 200 members (*CM*, V, 280). Foster's report in 1827 estimated the number at about 600. In the same year E. D. Moore reported a meeting of the Christian Conference of Alabama

<sup>38</sup>*CM*, Vol. IV (1830), p. 18.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, IV (Aug. 1830), 191f.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, V (1831), 280.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, VI (1832).

<sup>42</sup>Cf. the report of Griffeth Cathey, *ibid.*, VI (Jan. 4, 1832), 29.



near Florence attended by fourteen ordained and seven unordained preachers. "About 300 communed."<sup>43</sup> James E. Matthews reported 20 churches and 1500 members in 1831.<sup>44</sup>

*Indiana.* Some account has been given in Part I of the beginnings in Indiana. Clement Nance moved to Indiana (Floyd County) in 1805. Another early preacher we note is John McClung, "an enthusiastic follower of B. W. Stone," who came to Indiana from Kentucky and in 1812 established a church at Kent called White River church. Some of the early groups like those of John Wright, Joseph Hostetler, Elijah Goodwin, Beverly Vawter, and Elijah Martindale began independently of Stone but came to be associated with his movement gradually so that by the middle of the 1820's they were all considered a part of that movement. Some of them came into the reformation by separating from various Baptist groups, but not under the influence of the Campbell group, as did many later ones; the origins are for the most part along free or independent lines.<sup>45</sup> Murch dates the first reformation church from the Campbell point of view in the disassociation of the Silver Creek church in Clark County from the Baptists in 1829.<sup>46</sup> We have not been able to establish just when the Indiana Christian Conference was begun, but it met in the fall of 1825 at Blue Springs, Monroe Co. At this meeting Elijah Goodwin, who had been baptized near Princeton, Indiana, in 1820 by some "New Light" Christians, was ordained a preacher.<sup>47</sup> A report of a meeting of this conference is given in the *Christian Messenger* of 1826. Seventeen preachers belonged to it.<sup>48</sup> Another conference, the Deer Creek Conference, was mentioned in the same volume.<sup>49</sup> The White River Conference is mentioned in the *Messenger* of 1829. The report to Foster gave the number of the Christians in Indiana in 1827 as 1,200.

*Illinois.* The earliest church in Illinois which sought to be a N. T. church was established on July 17, 1819. It was at Barney's Prairie in Wabash County. Other Christian churches followed: Coffee Creek in Wabash Co. (August 1819), and Antioch near Cantrall in Sangamon County (May 15, 1820), Little Grove near Paris (1826), and Mulkeytown (mid-1820's).<sup>50</sup> Haynes dates the beginning of cooperation in Illinois in 1834 as an outgrowth of a meeting at Jacksonville attended by Barton W. Stone, John Rigdon, Alexander Reynolds, Josephus Hewett, H. W. Osborn, Abner Peeler, Edward D. Baker,

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, II (1827), 262.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, V (1831), 280.

<sup>45</sup>The accounts are given in C. W. Cauble, *Disciples of Christ in Indiana* (Indianapolis, Meigs Publishing Company, 1930), pp. 25ff.

<sup>46</sup>J. D. Murch, *Christians Only* (Cincinnati, Standard Publishing Company, 1962), p. 124.

<sup>47</sup>Cauble, *op. cit.* p. 39.

<sup>48</sup>*I.*, 22.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>50</sup>N. S. Haynes, *History of Disciples of Christ in Illinois* (Cincinnati, Standard Publishing Co., 1915), pp. 22ff.



and others. But the report gathered for Foster in 1827 speaks of the Illinois or Wabash Conference and lists 10 preachers ordained and five unordained in it.

*Missouri.* The story in Missouri is a thrilling one, mostly a story of the westward thrust of the Stone Evangelistic fervor. The first preachers were Thomas McBride and Samuel Rogers, co-laborers with Stone earlier. They entered the state from Kentucky before its admission to the union in 1821. McBride moved in 1816. By 1820 there were eight churches.<sup>51</sup> Many congregations were organized between that date and 1830. Outstanding Stone preachers followed, such as Joel Hayden, T. M. Allen, Marcus P. Wills, and Francis Palmer.<sup>52</sup> There seem to be few records of the early meetings. A reference is made to the conference in Missouri in the *Christian Register and Almanac* of 1827, but no details are given. There is a reference in *The Christian Messenger* of 1830 to a conference meeting. Twenty churches had met "with many not represented."<sup>53</sup>

*Other States.* The states mentioned were the earliest and the strongest in regard to Stone's influence. But the movement spread in other directions. In Georgia, Christian churches had existed from early in the 19th century. Stone made more than one trip to the state. There are numerous instances among the O'Kelly men reported in the *Herald of Gospel Liberty* of work in this section. Joel Hayden reported in 1812 that he was preaching in the state.<sup>54</sup> A report from the northwestern section of Georgia told of a conference of churches with twenty-three churches, twenty elders, and six other preachers and exhorters, with at least 575 members.<sup>55</sup> In Iowa (at that time Indian Territory) Christians from Missouri moved up the river, joined by many emigrants from Illinois and Indiana. One such group was led by the Rawlins and Heath families. William Rawlins became a frequent contributor to the *Christian Messenger*, beginning in 1832, first from Mt. Tabor, Monroe County, Indiana.<sup>56</sup> He then moved to Stilesville, Hendricks Co. Later he moved to Iowa, where he preached and organized churches and conferences after the pattern he had inherited from the Stone churches. Stone referred to him as "my friend and brother."<sup>57</sup> From here in the mid-40's the Rawlins and Heath families moved to Texas near Lancaster and established the first congregation (Cold Spring) in Dallas county. The Heaths were forebears of President Don Heath Morris of Abilene Christian College.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>51</sup>Garrison, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>52</sup>Cf. T. P. Haley, *The Dawn of the Reformation in Missouri* (Kansas City, Smart, 1888), pp. 54ff.

<sup>53</sup>*Christian Messenger*, VI (Oct. 10, 1831).

<sup>54</sup>*Herald of Gospel Liberty*, V (1812), 456.

<sup>55</sup>*Christian Messenger*, IV (1830), 45. For the Georgia story see J. Edward Moseley, *Disciples of Christ in Georgia* (St. Louis, Bethany Press, 1954). <sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, VI (1832), 337. <sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, IX (1835), 96.

<sup>58</sup>The congregation at Cold Spring had its beginning in July, 1846. It was under the leadership of Roderick and William Rawlins, Sr.

It was a man who had been intimately associated with the Stone movement who first preached the Gospel from the Restoration point of view in the capital of Arkansas. B. F. Hall, visiting in Little Rock in 1832, reported that he found recent immigrants from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama and that he had gathered them together to form a congregation.<sup>59</sup>

Reference has already been made to the independent group of French Huguenots in North Alabama who came into the Stone movement. There was close association between the leaders of this group and the early evangelization and building of conferences in Tennessee. E. D. Moore, B. F. Hall, the Matthews, the Defees, and the D'Spains were active in the region. Collin McKinney (a Kentuckian who had been converted to the Stone movement) and E. D. Moore were in Texas by 1824. The Matthews<sup>60</sup> papers quote a statement from A. J. Bush's booklet, *The Background of the First Christian Church, McKinney, Texas*,

Among the oldest records of the people calling themselves Christians only (*sic*), date back to the year 1824. Two families had settled in what is now Northeast Texas (Actually it was east of Texarkana, but they thought they were in Texas, RLR)—Collin McKinney and family and Elder E. D. Moore and family. The members of both of these families that were old enough were in the church. Both owned negroes that were also members of the Christian church. Eld. E. D. Moore held services in his home and preached to his family and some neighbors.<sup>61</sup>

Others of this Stone group spearheaded the removal of many people of the Christian churches to Texas. Wm. Defee wrote to Stone in 1833 that he was preaching in the Sabine region of that state.<sup>62</sup> The Matthews and the D'Spains led a whole "church on wheels" to Texas from West Tennessee in 1835. This group which hired David Crockett as their guide, stopped at Clarksville, from where later they moved on to the lower reaches of East Texas. The names of the above-mentioned preachers and families figure prominently in the early history of the churches of Texas.

These Stone followers were to be followed by many on the way to the Lone Star state. For example, another preacher who was associated with the Stone preachers in Alabama and Tennessee (his name occurs several times in the list of preachers attending confer-

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, VIII (1834), 246.

<sup>60</sup>The Matthews papers are a group of family letters and records deposited in the library at Texas Christian University. The writers are grateful to the librarian for making these records available.

<sup>61</sup>Moore must have returned to Alabama and Tennessee, for his name occurs in the 30's in the *Christian Messenger* as being in Alabama. (He later returned to Texas where he died. This information is all that is known about Moore being with McKinney. Evidently Bush knew what he was saying as one of Moore's daughters married a Dr. Smith, an early physician of McKinney. Smith's daughter was one of the first members of the church at McKinney. Bush preached there.)

<sup>62</sup>*Christian Messenger*, VII (1833), 282.



ence in Alabama, e.g., *CM*, V, 281), was Thacker V. Griffin. He came to Dallas County in 1846 and organized a church that year at Hord's Ridge (Oak Cliff).<sup>63</sup> Amon McCommas, also a Stone recruit, came to Dallas and preached as early as 1844.<sup>64</sup>

This survey has not attempted to get behind the scenes in the state of Virginia. Many Christian churches in the state were established in the early years by O'Kelly and also by the Elias Smith group (especially in the Shenendoah Valley). In 1812 Smith noted that he had recently been to a meeting in that valley at which more than a thousand were in attendance.<sup>65</sup> Many of these churches later came into the Restoration Movement from both the O'Kelly and the Smith areas of influence. The churches were organized into conferences very early, and they considered themselves in fellowship with the Christians of the West. There was frequent interchange of preachers and visitors. But they were not directly influenced by the Stone movement. There is also a Christian conference in Michigan reported in the *Christian Messenger* in 1835.<sup>66</sup>

It is obvious from the above survey that our reports of the conferences, and hence the spread of the Stone movement, are sketchy. But from this material one begins to grasp the extent of the Stone activity.<sup>67</sup> From it one can see that at the time of the union with the Campbell forces beginning in 1832, the Stone plea had already covered practically the whole of the settled region of the Mississippi basin. What is important, too, is that the continuity of these efforts was such that even after the union many of these conferences were continued for years, and the men who worked in them considered the united work a projection of the work that had begun under the man whom they affectionately called "Father" Stone at Cane Ridge so many years ago.

One who knew the Stone movement quite well considered the success of the Stone group the key to the later success of the movement as a whole:

The Reformation had an easy conquest over all our churches, for the reason that they were right, constitutionally, i.e., they had taken originally the Bible alone for their only rule in faith and practice. It was not necessary therefore that they should change their ground; but all they needed was a better understanding of it. This explains the fact of the early triumph of the Reformation in Kentucky and especially of its having so deep a hold in the Blue Grass region. Brother Stone and those working with him, had constituted churches throughout the central and northern portion of Kentucky upon the Bible and

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<sup>63</sup>John Henry Brown, *History of Dallas, County, Texas: From 1837 to 1887* (Dallas: Milligan Cornett & Farnham, 1887), pp. 71f.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>65</sup>*Herald of Gospel Liberty*, V, 424.

<sup>66</sup>*Christian Messenger*, X (1835), 256.

<sup>67</sup>The report to the *Christian Register and Almanac* in 1827 estimated the total number in five states (Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri) at 12,940.

the Bible alone, and all these, without exception, came early into the Reformation.<sup>68</sup>

The fervid spirit of evangelism characteristic of Stone and his followers was the key to their success. Stone had the true genius of a religious leader. He fired his companions with the conviction that the church had gone into apostasy in the Middle Ages and that religious people must come out of Babylon and go back to the Bible and the Lord's church or be lost. With the love of God in their hearts, nothing in their pockets, and little on their backs, they went forth to proclaim Christ and his way. They recognized no discouragement, gloried in their weaknesses, and accepted no defeats. In much of the South Central United States the success of the Restoration Movement was due to their efforts.

After the union of the Stone and Campbell forces and when some of the Campbell men began to talk as if their efforts had been the first to attempt a restoration of the church in America, there were hard feelings over the attempt to write off the Stone movement as merely preliminary. It is not our intention to add any fuel to an old fire. But it is probable that Stone's movement has not received its deserved credit.

On July 8, 1879, Philip Mulkey, a descendant of the early Kentucky Mulkeys, responded to an article which he felt did not do justice to Stone in a letter to the editor, F. G. Allen:

Bro. Campbell only stepped upon the platform which B. W. Stone had erected, and was standing on years before. There were John Mulkey, Reuben Dooley, Daniel Traves, and others who were pleading for the Bible alone as the only safe rule of Faith and Practice.

These men gathered around that standard a host of young men and old ones with the love of God in their hearts, and went forth without purse and scrip; and multitudes bowed to the scepter of King Immanuel, and the great battle for the Bible was more than half fought when Bro. Campbell entered the field. It is true Bro. Campbell brought with him lessons not learned by these brethren, baptism for remission and weekly breaking of bread, which was accepted by them.

These old pioneers went forth alone, and when Bro. Campbell came out they were ready to fall into line. Scattered over Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio, this host went hand in hand with him, and were ready to defend him against the slanders that sectarianism was heaping upon him. He had nothing like the persecution to encounter that the old brethren had.

With the blessing of God they planted the "Bible alone" sentiment all over the breadth of the land, and the number increased daily.<sup>69</sup>

Barton W. Stone, Rice Haggard, John Mulkey, Philip Mulkey, Ephraim D. Moore, James E. Matthews, Mansel Matthews, B. F. Hall, Allen and Carrol Kendrick, James Hughes, Joel Hayden, Reuben Dooley, Samuel and John Rogers, William Kincade, T. M. Allen,

<sup>68</sup>John I. Rogers, *Autobiography of Elder Samuel Rogers*, p. 115.

<sup>69</sup>Philip Mulkey, "Correspondence," *The Old Path Guide*, Vol. 1 (1879), 291.



William Jourdan, Francis Palmer, and John Gano! These names perhaps mean little to us. They mean little even to many students of the Restoration Movement, for their stories have never been adequately told. But surely their names are remembered in Heaven and recorded in the Lamb's book of life. Would that their story could be told more fully and their spirit recaptured by the Lord's people today.